



## Foster Parent Spotlight



Steve & Karen Vacek have been foster parents since August of 2004. Karen works part-time as an x-ray tech along with taking care of the family farm. Steve is a family practice doctor. Steve & Karen decided to become foster parents because after having their own birth son they felt they were fortunate enough to open their home to those in need.

Since becoming foster parents they have had 4 placements. Throughout the

placements what they have found to be true is "any little good that can be done can't be undone". Steve & Karen both said PACE training was awesome! It was a "date" night for them. Being around other foster parents was "priceless", with all the stories, resolutions, and advice that was shared. Words of Wisdom from Steve & Karen "Love Well, Laugh Often, Love Much".

**Contact Numbers:**

Waukesha H & HS  
262-548-7212

Eve Altizer Children's Mental Health Outreach  
262-548-7310

Crisis Mentoring Pager  
414-848-6711

Medical Emergency: 911  
Family Emergency: 211

Judy David  
Support Group President  
414-671-3747  
(home) 414-462-8446

Lisa Alden, Supervisor  
262-548-7271

Shari Rather,  
Foster Care Coordinator  
262-548-7267

Amber Sparks  
Visitation Coordinator  
262-896-6849

**May '06 Placements**

Regular Foster Care:  
67 Children  
0 Admitted  
3 Discharged

Treatment Foster Care:  
29 Children  
1 Admitted  
2 Discharged

Group Homes:  
6 Children  
2 Admitted  
0 Discharged

Residential Care Facilities:  
14 Children  
1 Admitted  
0 Discharged

Relative Placements:  
52 Children  
5 Admitted  
4 Discharged

**Social Workers:**

Bob Alioto  
262-548-7262

Peggy Beisser  
262-548-7261

Kathe Blum  
262-548-7275

Barb Hufschmidt  
262-548-7270

Margaret Johnson  
262-548-7265

Suzanne Koberstein  
262-548-7348

Elizabeth Russo  
262-548-7349

Kim Sampson  
262-548-7273

Linda Senger  
262-548-7698

Marilyn Videgar  
262-548-7363

Ted Wuerslin  
262-548-7269

Jennifer Wygle  
262-548-7260

**We Need You!**

For more information about becoming a foster parent in Waukesha County, please contact Shari Rather at:

srather@waukeshacounty.gov  
**262-548-7267**

or visit our website at [www.waukeshacounty.gov](http://www.waukeshacounty.gov) and follow the links to foster care.

**Waukesha County  
Health & Human Services**

**July 2006**

# Foster Care Forum

## Summer Safety Tips for Children

1. Always CHECK FIRST with your parents or the person in charge before you go anywhere or do anything. Be sure to CHECK IN regularly with your parents or a trusted adult when you're not with them.

2. Always TAKE A FRIEND when you play or go somewhere. It's safer and more fun.

3. Don't be tricked by people who offer you special treats or gifts. Never accept anything from anyone without your parents' permission.

4. Stay SAFE when you're home alone by keeping the door locked; not opening the door for or talking to anyone who stops by unless the person is a trusted family friend or relative, you feel comfortable being alone with that person, and the visit has been pre-approved by your parents; and never telling anyone who calls that you're home by yourself. Have a neighbor or trusted adult you can call if you're scared or there's an emergency.

5. Never go into a public restroom by yourself.

6. Never go alone to malls, movies, video arcades, or parks. Take a friend with you, and always CHECK FIRST with your parents to make sure its okay.

7. Don't panic if you feel lost. Identify the safest place to go or person to ask for help in reuniting you with your family. Never search for them on your own, and never go off alone with anyone who is trying to reunite you with your family.

8. Be careful when you play. Stay away from pools, canals, and other bodies of water unless you are with an adult. Don't play near busy streets or deserted areas, and never take shortcuts unless you have your parents' permission.

9. Don't wear clothes or carry items with your name on the outside, and don't be confused just because someone you don't know calls out your name.

10. Don't get into a car or go near a car with someone in it unless you are with your parents or a trusted adult. Never take a ride from someone without CHECKING FIRST with your parents.

11. Be careful playing or riding your bicycle as it gets dark. Sometimes it is difficult for people driving cars to see you. Wear reflectors and protective clothing if your parents say you can play outside after dark.

12. Don't be afraid to say NO and GET AWAY from any situation that makes you feel uncomfortable or confused. TRUST YOUR FEELINGS, and be sure to TELL a trusted adult if something happens that makes you feel this way.
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### "Take Me Out To the Ball Game"

Waukesha County Health and Human Services invites our foster families to Miller Park for a tailgate and Brewers game on

### August 22nd, Save the Date!

Watch the mail for your invitation and details!!!



**Foster Care Forum**  
Waukesha Health & Human Services  
500 Riverview Ave. Waukesha 53188  
262-548-7212

What's Inside:  
July 2006...

- PAGE 1**
- SAVE THE DATE - Aug. 22, Foster Parent tailgate at Miller Park
  - Summer safety tips for children
- PAGE 2**
- Jesse's Corner
  - Social Worker Spotlight - Lisa Alden
  - Summer Heat Can Kill
- PAGE 3**
- How Foster Care Changed a Teen's Perspective
  - Thank You to our printing sponsor, Amerisign and Graphics
- PAGE 4**
- FP Spotlight
  - Placements
  - Contacts

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## Jesse's Corner



I can't believe school has finished and summer is here! We hope everyone had a successful school year and hope you have a safe and wonderful summer vacation. Some events coming up this summer are:

- Our Foster Parent Appreciation Event: Brewer Game at Miller Park on Tuesday, August 22nd. The game starts at 7:05pm. More details to follow! This is a good opportunity to have some fun and support our local team. Hope to see you there!

- We're scheduled our next PACE foster parent training. It will begin on Thursday, September 7th at 6:15 pm at Waukesha County Health and Human Services, 500 Riverview Avenue, Waukesha, Wisconsin. The training will be held in the Brookfield Room. Please feel free to inform your friends/family. If questions, please contact Shari Rather at (262) 548-7267.

As some of you may know, Judge Linda VanderWater will be leaving the bench and moving to another court. I would like to thank her for her commitment and support of the children and families we serve and wish her well in the future. It's my understanding that Judge Robert Mawdsley will be replacing Judge VanderWater in August. Please welcome Judge Mawdsley to the bench as we look forward to working with him.

Please have a safe and enjoyable summer!!

## Summer Heat Can Kill

**Just a reminder about the summer heat in your car: When it is 85 degrees outside a car will heat to 102 degrees in 10 minutes. In just 30 minutes the inside of a car will heat up to 120 degrees. Please always take your foster child with you even if you are just running into a business for a few seconds. Heat can kill!!!**

## Social Worker Spotlight

### Lisa Alden



#### 1. Personal Information: (marriage, kids, pets, hobbies)

I am divorced and am raising my two beautiful "princesses" – Alexis age 7 and Tayler age 4. I remain close with my 2 step-daughters, Cassandra (21) and Heather (17). I do have a "significant other" in my life who's absolutely wonderful. I have a German Shepherd "puppy" (almost 1 year old and weighs about 100 lbs!!) - Brutus and 2 cats – Penelope and

Emily. Taking care of the girls, the dog, the cats, the job and house leaves little "extra" time but I do try to enjoy waterskiing, atv'ing, camping/traveling, festivals, reading, swimming, etc.....

#### 2.Educational Background: (university attended and degree earned)

I received my BS in psychology from UW-LaCrosse in 1992. I went on right away and got my MS from UW-Milwaukee in 1995 in counseling psychology. I completed my 3000 hours of therapy experience and became a Licensed Professional Counselor in 1999.

#### 3. Work Experience: (length at Waukesha, how long working as a social worker, areas worked in)

While I was completing my Master's Degree, I worked at Milwaukee County Child Welfare as an on-going social worker. After finishing my schooling, I was a clinical therapist at St. Luke's Hospital adult in-patient unit. I came to work at Waukesha County in the out-patient mental health clinic in 1997 as a mobile crisis worker. I went on to coordinate the Children's Mental Health Program for the county from 2000 to 2002. I have been supervising the Permanency Services unit for Waukesha for the past 4 years now. In addition to all of the above, I have also taught at Carthage College in the past and continue to provide weekend mental health crisis services through the Mental Health Association in Waukesha at this time.

#### 4. What brings you the greatest joy as a social worker? Why did you become a social worker?

I had always aspired to be a clinical therapist. However, my work in child welfare, "to get me through school", brought out a love and passion in me I never realized existed. I truly believe that families are the bedrock of our communities and such a significant force in our development as individuals. To be a part of a system that supports families in "being the best they can be", challenges parents to constantly improve, and helps care for our most precious and vulnerable members of society, makes me proud. I believe in the work we are all doing, foster parents, social workers, service providers, etc. and trust that we will make a positive impact – one child, one family at a time!

## How Foster Care Has Changed a Teen's Point of View

This is a feel good story about Brandy\*, a girl who's been in foster care for almost 2 years. It's been a bitter-sweet road and here's two documents written that give an idea of what it's been like for her.

#### This was written by Brandy when she first entered foster care for a school project:

*A typical day in middle school is hard for me. I get blamed for stuff; I get rude comments on how I look each day. I get called a liar or a bad name. I get called fat or ugly. If I talk to someone and someone sees me, I get blamed for saying something else. I don't get any good or nice comments from anybody. I don't get respect, and I am beginning to lose my few friends that I have. I get bad comments right behind my back. I try to get my friends back, but they don't want to be my friend anymore. Nothing is going good in school for me.*

*I am now a foster child. I am staying with people I hardly know. I am confused, and I want a lot of answers. I don't sleep in my bed anymore. I will be here for six months or more. I don't see my family as much as I used to anymore. I only really see the foster parents now. The foster parents are nice to me. It is really tough for me right now.*



**Here's an article that was written about her by her teachers regarding what a long way she's come this current school year. She won the Diversity Award (similar to a Citizenship award). Brandy has more friends than she can count now, and has a filled summer social calendar this year.**

*Respecting diversity is more than acceptance of those who are different. It is an attitude rooted in true respect and appreciation of all persons. Respecting diversity is an opportunity to enrich and strengthen the fabric of our society to help to unite us, not divide us. In our world today, people tend to focus on the differences, the negatives, the can't do's of life. Through this award we would like to honor someone who has demonstrated respect of others. Someone who is able to emotionally take another's perspective, to accept others without criticism, someone who truly uses diversity as a building block and not a weapon. So tonight we honor someone who does walk the talk of respect and has a kind and sharing heart. Brandy, Congratulations!!!*


There was a huge roar from the audience and a standing ovation when her name was called. There were so many comments (via email, phone and in person) from friends saying how she really deserved that award. I'm Brandy's foster parent and I think this is what foster parenting is about. Teaching kids how to cope with the struggles of life, and trying to make good choices as often as possible. I'm not sure what will happen in our future regarding Brandy and her siblings, we may keep them, or they may go back to their parents, however, I truly believe that we enriched their lives and have shown them things that will stay with them forever. We are so lucky to have these kids living with us. I also know that my husband and I will love and care for them the rest of our lives, whether they live with us or not, and I can already see how that kind of support can change a child. I've also become a better adult for having them in my life! No matter what happens, I know in my heart that if I could go back in time, I wouldn't change a thing! Just knowing these kids have more confidence and more fun on a daily basis is all I need to know to get me through whatever the future may hold.

*\*Names have been changed to protect identities.*

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